

A CRY OF DESIRE.

Joseph Truman in "The Spectator."
Yet one lay to the love, long and sweet,
Till heaven, as it were, was
Before the world, for my feet
Are in the vale of years.

And the night comes, in whose realm of fire
(So the sad Hebrew said)
Is found no kind of device
Of warm heart, pondering love.

I would to God I had your faith firmest,
That seems almost to know
It is but a moment to forget,
Then wake, the boundless glow
Of a new dawn in new heavens to see,
And feel a flash of continuity
Comfort the personal soul.

The beauty, wonder, freshness, youth and might
Of the still world, the sea,
Lays of dawn, the shadows of the night,
The breath of mountains free:

The music of the river as it glides
Gleaming thro' meadow lands,
The virgin passion that enchants and guides,
The charm of children's hands:

Shadows these are, perchance, pale shadows cold,
A glimmering light, a gleam,
Mists that shall melt to mists of burning gold,
Surely, sometime, somewhere?

And every sweet dream feeling mortal thing
Heightened and endless be,
Ah! then the clouds of life would have no sting,
Death would mean victory!

PIETRO GHISLERI.

BY F. MARION CRAWFORD.
Author of "Sarcasmo," "The Three Fates," etc.

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As Ghisleri had anticipated, Adele kept up a lively correspondence with him for some time. All her letters were duly filed by Ubalini, who took certified copies of Pietro's replies, but did not mention what he himself had done in the matter. Adele bargained sharply until Ghisleri wrote to her plainly as he would that the manuscript was not to be had for less than the sum he had repeatedly named, and that he could do nothing more for her. Thereupon she answered that she would consider the matter, and did not write again. Pietro, after waiting several days, left Rome again, and returned to Torro de Ghisleri, glad to be relieved at last from the irksome and dangerous task of writing concise and lawyerlike communications about a subject which did not interest him at all.

Meanwhile Adele had been through a series of emotions of which Pietro knew nothing, and which very nearly drove her to increasing her daily dose of morphia again. On receiving Ubalini's very respectful and straightforward letter she had felt that she was saved at last, though it definitely destroyed the illusion by which she had so long persuaded herself that the confession was still in the cabinet of her father. Without much hesitation she wrote to Ubalini, and had a bank note for 500 francs in the folded sheet. She begged him to send a special messenger with the sealed packet to Castel Savelli, and requested him, in spite of his protest, to accept the inclosed sum to cover expenses.

During forty-eight hours she enjoyed to the full the anticipation of at last getting back the letter which had cost her such terrible anxiety at various times during the last two years and a half. Then came Ubalini's answer, though when she opened it she had no idea that it was from him. He had made his clerk both write and sign the fair copy of the first letter which had been written on paper not stamped with an address. He now wrote with his own hand upon the paper he kept for business correspondence, upon which, of course, the address was printed. There was consequently not the slightest resemblance between the two letters. But Adele was not prepared for the contents. The first thing she noticed was her bank note, carefully pinned inside the sheet. Even the form of addressing her was not the same, and the one now employed was the correct one, the Savelli being one of the families in which the title of Prince and Princess belonged indiscriminately to all the children, and consequently to the wives of all the sons. The letter was as follows:

Signora Principessa—I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of a communication from Your Excellency in which you request me to send a certain sealed packet to Castel Savelli by a special messenger, and enclosing a bank note for 500 francs (Banca Romana S. 32,024/05) which I return herewith. I take the occasion to say that I know nothing whatever of the sealed packet referred to, and I beg to suggest that Your Excellency may have accidentally addressed the letter to some other person, perhaps in using a directory. If, however, it was written in answer to one supposed to have been indited to you by me, the letter must have been composed and sent by some designing person in the hope of intercepting the reply and gaining possession of the money, which I am glad to be able to send back to its original owner. Believe me, Signora Principessa, Your Excellency's most obedient,

RINALDO UBALINI.

The shock was almost more than Adele could bear, and the room reeled with her as she comprehended what had happened, for as she was about to understand it all. The truth did not strike her, however. What she believed was that the lawyer suggested, that some person had played a trick on her, and had made use of the Ubalini's name and address in the hope of getting the money he or she naturally expected that she would send as compensation for such an important service. The hardest to endure was the disappointment of finding that she was not to have the confession after all. The point proved was that, whether it was still in the cabinet or not, it had been found and carried off, there was in either case at least one person at large who knew it existed, and who knew that the contents would be greatly to her disadvantage if known. And if one person knew it, she argued, all Rome might be acquainted with the story, and probably was. But the comforting conviction that the letter was still safe at Gerano did not return. There was a tone about the first communication disclaimed by Ubalini which forced upon her the belief that the writer knew everything, and could ruin her at a moment's notice.

What Ubalini gained was the certainty that the story which Ghisleri described as current gossip was a fact, and a very serious one. He had played detective instead of lawyer, and he had been very successful. He knew also that, as he had acted altogether in the interests of his client, Ghisleri, and had returned Adele's money, no objection could, strictly speaking, be made to the stratagem, however it might be looked upon by gentlemen and men of the world, like Ghisleri himself. But Ubalini was a lawyer, and he was not a business to consider what the fine world would think of his doings. He filed Adele's letter with the copies of his own.

In the course of a few days Adele, who was all the time carrying on her correspondence with Pietro, gathered some hope from the latter's answers. She had a suspicion that he might keep all the notes he received from her, and after the first she was careful never to mention the manuscript except as "the confession," as he, on his part, was always to write out its title in full. It struck her, however, that a man playing such a part as she wished to have it thought that he was playing would naturally use some such means for making his letters seem commonplace if they should fall into the wrong hands, and it would be easy to persuade her friends that the autobiographical writings of Isabella Monteverdi meant Adele Savelli's confession, by common consent, though she herself had not taken the trouble to use such a long title more than once. The thought elated her and comforted her in a measure for the disappointment she had suffered, and which had shaken her nerves severely.

She now spent much time in going over the correspondence, and in the attempt to establish its exact value if regarded from the point of view of a systematic attempt to extort money. With a relative coolness which would have disgraced a strong man, and which showed how far she had recovered control of herself by diminishing the doses of morphia, she set to work to put her case together on the supposition that she meant to lay it before her husband, for instance, or any other intelligent person, with a request for aid. And the case, as she put it,

was better than might have been expected, though it depended ultimately for its solidity on the supposition that the confession could never be found.

In the first place, she intended to admit that she had been jealous of Laura for years, and to own frankly that she often said cruel and painful things of her, and of Arden, just as everybody else knew said spiteful things of somebody. She would even admit that she had first set about the rumor that Lord Herbert was intermarried, and that Laura had the evil eye. She could then point out that her conduct had suddenly changed in deference to her father's wishes, that there had been an open reconciliation, and that she had been her part as first, but made no excuse for the remorse she felt after Arden's death. For she meant to go on so far as to confess that Arden might have caught the scarlet fever in her house, seeing that her maid was only just recovering from it at the time. The woman's illness had been kept strictly secret, and she had been from the first taken to a distant part of the palace, so that Adele had not believed there could be any danger. Even her husband had not known what the maid's illness was, and poor Lucia had pleaded so hard not to be sent to the hospital that Adele had yielded. But to prove, she would say, how little fear of contagion she had, her own children had not been sent into the country. The Palazzo Savelli was big enough to have had a whole infirmary in one part of it, completely isolated from all the rest. Nevertheless, she had always felt that there was a possibility of Arden's last illness having been taken at that dinner party, and her secret remorse had caused her the greatest suffering. Between that and a nervous disorder from which she had little hope of ever recovering, she had fallen very ill, and had gone to Gerano. While there her persistence had so irked her in the matter of her past unkindness to her stepmother and to Arden that, although she had been to confession at Easter, she wrote a long letter to her confessor in Rome, going again over the full details of the past winter. From that point she could tell the truth, without even sparing Lucia, until she came to the discovery that it was Ghisleri himself who had picked up the letter, or confession, under the shaft of the eulphite. And here she would lay great stress on Ghisleri's attachment to Laura and consequent dislike of herself. The well-known fact that Pietro had fought a desperate duel merely because Camponovio said that Lady Herbert Arden might have the evil eye sufficiently showed to what lengths he would go in her defense. Nothing more would really be needed.

But there was plenty more. All Rome knew that he had broken with Maddalena d'Armi for Laura's sake, and that he had exhibited the most untiring devotion ever afterward. Never since the death of the Princess Corboreo, Adele would boldly assert had he been faithful to any one woman for such a length of time. That was a strong point. The Princess of Gerano herself could testify to her own anxiety about Laura since Ghisleri was so much with her. Laura herself had behaved in the most admirable manner ever since the reconciliation, but Ghisleri, in consequence of his own feelings, had become so very more royal than the king and more orthodox than the Pope. His dislike, if not his positive hatred, for Adele was apparent at every step of the story. He did not, it is true, speak of it to any one, but his reference was a well-known peculiarity of his character. It was when he was alone, when he was alone with Adele that he showed what he felt. But his manner was always courteous and rather formal. It was by sarcastic hints that he conveyed his meaning. Nevertheless, Adele had maintained the outward forms of friendly acquaintance, and once, some six months after Arden's death, when matters had not been so bad as they now were, she had asked him to stay a few days at Gerano. Lucia could testify that he was there at the time when the confession disappeared, and Lucia, who had attempted to extort money for it, and would have succeeded if the document had been forthcoming, had naturally been interested as any one to find it. Not until some time later had Adele suspected that it had been picked up by Ghisleri. The thing, of course, had not any very great value, but what woman, Adele would ask, could bear to think that the most private outpourings of her soul to her spiritual director were in the hands of a man who hated her, and who could, if he pleased, circulate them and make them the talk of the town? When Ghisleri, in the following winter, had begun to torment her systematically by quoting little phrases and expressions which she remembered to have written in the letter, she had at last boldly taxed him with having it in his possession, and he, with the unparalleled enthusiasm for which he was famous, had laughed at her and owned the truth. Every one would allow that this was very like him. She had threatened to complain to her husband, and he had expressed the utmost indifference. He was a known duelist and a dangerous adversary, and for her husband's sake she had held her tongue, while Ghisleri continued to make her life miserable with his witticisms. Then she had once asked him what he would consider an equivalent for the letter. He had laughed again, and had said that he would take a large sum of money in exchange for it, which, he added, he would devote to building a small hospital in the village of Torre de Ghisleri, saying that it would be for the good of her soul to forward a charity of that kind. She would not undertake to say whether he would have employed the money for any other purpose or not, if she had given it to him. Possibly he would not. But she had not been able to dispose of any such sum as he had then named. Under her marriage contract she controlled only her pin-money, and her father allowed her nothing out of the great fortune which would some day be hers. She and Ghisleri had corresponded about the matter in town, by notes sent backward and forward. She, on her part, had at that time thought she was doing wisely in burning his, but he had been less careful. He had, in fact, been so grossly negligent as to leave five of them at one time in the pocket of one of his coats. It was through his tailor to whom the coat had been sent for some alteration or repair that two of these notes had come back to Adele. A woman, apparently a seamstress, had come to her with them one day, and had offered them to her for sale, together with a card of Lady Herbert Arden's inclosed in an envelope addressed to "Maria B." at the general postoffice. On the card were written the words: "For Maria B., with best thanks." The woman confessed that she was in great distress, that she had found the letters in a coat upon which she was working, had easily ascertained who Ghisleri was and what his relations toward Lady Herbert were, and had appealed to the latter for help, offering the letters in exchange for any charity, and actually sending three of them when she had only received five francs. Lady Herbert had then sent her fifty francs more with the card in question, but the poor woman thought that very little. She bitterly repented not having brought them all at once to Donna Adele. Of course they belonged to her, and Donna Adele had a right to them all without payment. But the woman was very poor. Adele had hesitatingly given her a hundred francs and had kept the two notes and the card, which proved at least that even at that time she had been corresponding with Ghisleri and protesting her inability to pay the sum he demanded, and that Laura Arden was aware of the correspondence, and had been willing for Ghisleri's sake to pay money to obtain it. For a long time after this Adele had made no further attempt, but had continued to write secretly alone in conversation with Pietro, as many people had indeed noticed, because she could not bear to be perpetually annoyed by his reference to his power over her. Yet, out of fear lest some harm should befall her husband, she had still held her peace. Early in the preceding summer, shortly before leaving for her annual visit to Gerano, Ghisleri had managed to be alone with her, and had not lost the opportunity of inflicting another wound, which had revived all her old desire to obtain possession of the lost letter. He had, indeed, almost admitted that unless she would reconsider the matter he would send it to one of her friends to read. The Monteverdi library was then about to be sold, and many persons were talking of the famous confession of Isabella Monteverdi.

By way of safety, Adele, in agreeing to think the whole thing over once more, had told him that when writing she should speak of her own letter as though it were this well-known manuscript. She had already some experience of his carelessness in regard to notes. Against his own statement, and against her own secret, positive conviction, yet to give him one chance, as it were, she had made one desperate effort to have the cabinet opened and searched. Her father would remember how angry she had been, and, indeed, she had lost her temper, seeing always ill and nervous. He had positively refused. Then, in despair, she had reopened negotiations with Ghisleri, whose demands, though not so high as formerly, were still very beyond her means. As a matter of fact, the dealer had asked an exorbitant price for the manuscript, being well aware of its historical importance, which was little less than that attaching to the famous manuscript account of the Cenci trial. Adele was in despair. She had no means of raising such a sum as Ghisleri required, except by selling her jewels, which she could not possibly do without exciting her husband's suspicions. She was powerless. Had any woman ever been placed in such a situation? Ghisleri's last letter distinctly stated that he could do nothing more for her if she refused to buy the confession of Isabella Monteverdi at the price he had last named. Those were his very words. They meant that unless she paid, he would make use of the letter he had. He even added that in that case the manuscript would probably be long disposed of elsewhere, as though to make his meaning clearer.

Her position was very strong. Adele thought, as she reached the end of her statement, as she first drew it up in her own mind. A clever lawyer could doubtless make it even stronger. For he would know how to take advantage of every point, and how to call attention to the strongest and pass smoothly over the weaker links in the chain. The last danger, and the only real danger, lay in the possibility that the confession itself might be found and might be produced, with all which she said it contained, and with the one central black stain of which she made no mention in working up the case. But that man was not a man to be trifled with. If any one could, that man was Ghisleri, who had more than once gone very near the truth in the hints he had thrown out. Say that he had it, suppose the hypothesis a fact, its being in his possession would be the most irrefragable evidence of all. He would not dare to show it, for though it might ruin her, it would be far worse ruin to him, for it would of itself suffice to prove the truth of every word of her story, and he would not only incur the full penalty of the law for a most abominable attempt at becoming blackmail, but his own memory would be blasted forever as the most dishonorable and cowardly villain ever went to penal servitude. As for herself, she felt that she had not long to live, and if worse came to worst, a little overdose of morphia would end it all. She would have had her triumph, and she would have seen Laura's face before she died.

It did not occur to her to ask herself any question about the origin of a letter so valuable as to make the sacrifice of life itself seem almost as the accomplishment of its end. She was not able to trace the history of her husband's behavior, her concentration of memory, as she was able to be the force of vivid imagination to construct the scenes she anticipated in the future. That the most dire revenge should be contemplated, pursued, and ultimately executed for the sake of a wrong wholly imaginary in the first instance is not altogether novel in the history of humanity. There are minds which under certain conditions cannot judge of the past as they can of events present and to come. Adele, instead of Laura Arden, amounted almost to a fixed idea. It had begun in very small things. Its origin lay, perhaps, in the simple fact that Laura was beautiful, whereas Adele had been hardly pretty at her best, and its first great development had been the consequence of Francesco Savelli's undisciplined preference for the stepmother of his father's wife. All the young girl's beauty and vain nature had been roused and wounded by the slight, and as years had gone by and Savelli showed no signs of forgetting his early attachment to Laura, the wound had grown more sore and more angry until it had become a festering ulcer. It had begun in very small things. Its origin lay, perhaps, in the simple fact that Laura was beautiful, whereas Adele had been hardly pretty at her best, and its first great development had been the consequence of Francesco Savelli's undisciplined preference for the stepmother of his father's wife. 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